

## Legislative Update

To the citizens of the 28th Legislative District from Sen. Mike Carrell and Rep. Gigi Talcott



from the desk of  
Senator

# Mike Carrell

PO Box 40428  
109A Newhouse Building  
Olympia, WA 98504-0428  
(360) 786-7654

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

This is the first session since 1994 in which one party controlled the House, the Senate and the Governor's office. It was like a runaway car with a stuck accelerator and no brakes.

Washington's systemic budget problems were largely ignored, leaving a patchwork of band-aids and highest taxes.

Despite this, I was able to reach across the aisle to work with other senators to push good ideas and to craft compromises.

As always, it is an honor to serve as your senator.

Sincerely, Mike

Dear Friends,

A 9.5¢ tax increase and a 12% increase in government spending - not the usual, useful problem solving legislature I like. Thus we should expect more taxes and more spending when one political party controls everything in Olympia.

Hope you can take a few minutes to look thru this short report from my 105 days representing you in Olympia. Or, better yet, join Mike and me at one of our town halls. I'll always value your ideas.

Gratefully,

Gigi



from the desk of  
Representative

# Gigi Talcott

PO Box 40600  
426B Legislative Building  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
(360) 786-7890



Many issues are discussed in greater detail inside this newsletter. Anytime you have a question or advice for us — please call, write or email. Our contact information is provided.

See what's inside...

- The largest operating budget in state history
- The highest gas tax in the nation
- Preparing students for the world that awaits them
- Increasing access to health care
- Judiciary and Human Services and Corrections
- Election reform
- And much more...

## The largest operating budget in state history (Gigi)

Much like families must do with their budgets and spending, state government passes a state operating budget every two years that pays for public schools, higher education, human services, government and judicial operations, and other things.

This year, you may have heard about a supposed “enormous budget shortfall.”

But here are the actual facts ...

- There was **more new money to spend** this budget cycle, not less – **\$1.7 billion** more.
- The Legislature **raised spending by 12.4 percent (\$2 billion)**. It could have increased spending by 7 percent without raising a nickel in new taxes!

Democrats ignored a great opportunity to pass a no-new-taxes budget and, instead, passed one that is **risky, unsustainable**, and sets us up for a **budget shortfall** in two years. While Mike and I both voted against it, every

Democrat in the House – and nearly all in the Senate – voted for what ended up being the **largest budget in state history**.

Here are some more facts on the budget ...

- Relies on **\$500 million in tax increases** and **\$233 million** in one-time money taken from other accounts dedicated specifically for other purposes.



- **New taxes** include: a death (estate) tax, extended warranty tax, and much higher liquor and cigarette taxes.

I haven't experienced a session

like this since my first year in Olympia in 1993. That was the last time one political party controlled the budget process – the House, Senate and governor's office.

Unfortunately, **you and our job-providers are going to pay** for this growth of government, as always.

**State workers deserve equal pay for equal work**

Our state operating budget **unfairly punishes several thousand state employees** who, for various reasons, decided not to be represented by unions. State employees who are in **unions will get rewarded** with their pay increases on July 1, while non-union state employees will have to wait until Sept. 1.

Giving pay raises to state employees at different times based on their union status **may not even be legal** and invites costly litigation at the **taxpayers' expense**. One thing is for sure – it's not fair. State employees deserve **equal pay for equal work**.

## The highest gas tax in the nation (Mike)

The Democrat-run Legislature passed \$12.5 billion in new transportation taxes this session, including **increasing the gas tax by 9.5 cents per gallon**, a \$10-75 weight fee per vehicle, and \$400 million in other license fees. This is a **76 percent increase** when you include the nickel tax in 2003!

In doing so, the Legislature ignored the will of the people:

**Referendum 51** (2002), a nine cent gas tax, was defeated.

**Initiative 695** (2002), reducing license tabs to \$30, was approved.

Only \$8.5 billion will be used for state projects – \$600 million will be given to local governments and \$3.9 billion for debt service. Much of this tax will be **spent in King County**, not to improve our roads. The **indirect effect** of these

taxes will be **higher prices for goods and services** you buy.

*“While taxpayers will be hit by the highest gas tax in the nation, they will also find that little was done to change the way the state Department of Transportation spends money to plan and build roads. Needless to say, Gigi and I voted against this massive tax increase!”*

– Mike

# Town Hall Meeting

**You're Invited!**

This January, prior to the beginning of the legislative session, we sent a survey out to 28th District residents. We'd like to thank everyone who participated in the survey – especially those who helped tally them. Your answers helped to shape our work for the session.

Now we're hoping you'll join us for one of four upcoming town hall meetings. You can personally ask any question you may have – we hope you'll join us!

**June 11, 9-10 a.m.**

*Steilacoom Library*  
2950 Steilacoom Blvd.  
Steilacoom, WA  
(253) 588-1452

**June 14, 7-8 p.m.**

*University Place Library*  
3605 Bridgeport Way W.  
Tacoma, WA  
(253) 565-9447

**June 11, 11-12 noon**

*Clover Park Technical College*  
(Bldg. 3 off of Lakewood Ave)  
4500 Steilacoom Blvd. S.W.  
Lakewood, WA  
(253) 589-5800

**June 16, 7-8 p.m.**

*Fire Station 16*  
7217 6th Ave.  
Tacoma, WA  
(253) 591-5737



## Preparing our students for the world that awaits them (Gigi)

The real tension in education this year is **how do we ensure students graduate by meeting higher academic standards** – without creating too high of a hurdle that risks even more students dropping out of school?

Currently, almost 50 percent of students in our state quit before graduating high school. Students in the Class of 2008 won't graduate without first meeting state standards in reading, writing and math. It's the law, yet only 38 percent of our 10th graders successfully completed the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).

**I'm fighting to keep our world class standards** in place, yet I'm not convinced the current WASL is the only way to measure those standards. I'm working on other **rigorous, rele-**

**vant alternatives to the WASL and welcome your ideas!**

Here are a few other initiatives both Mike and I worked on in the House and Senate Education Committees this session:

- **House Bill 2036** – the “**Ready to Read**” program helps bring books to children, parents to schools, and success to students. The goal is to help parents (every child's first and most important teacher) prepare their children for early success in school.
- **House Bills 1709 and 1068** – introduce new, individualized, computerized, affordable testing tools to get students, teachers and parents test results back in one day.
- **House Bill 1633 and Senate Bill 5828** – expand rigorous, relevant,

computerized learning opportunities for students outside traditional classroom settings

While each of these proposals and many others gained **unanimous support from both Republicans and Democrats** on the respective Education Committees, only one survived the House Appropriations Committee. I was able to save some of these innovative ideas in the state operating budget.

As a life-long teacher, ranking minority leader on the House Education Committee and now a grandmother, I firmly believe there is nothing our state government can do that is more important than **ensuring every child earns a world class education**. Our future depends on it. **I'll keep working towards this goal.**

## Judiciary and Corrections and Human Services (Mike)

Judiciary was my first choice – and Human Services and Corrections my second – for committee assignments in the Senate. I was fortunate to be assigned to both committees!

### Judiciary Committee

Judiciary has always been my favorite because of the constitutional issues related to families, the courts and crime that come before the committee. This session was no exception.

A number of constitutional and criminal issues – including the right of gun possession and the repeal of parts of the “Three Strikes” initiative – were considered. **I helped to put together bipartisan coalitions** of Senate committee members to stop most of these types of radical bills.

My bill – **Senate Bill 5131** (its companion was **House Bill 1687**) – treats those found “not guilty by reason of insanity” of a violent offense the same as a sane violent felon. This

legislation was approved by this committee and is now law – it was the **only significant “gun” bill that passed** the Legislature in the last few years because all sides agreed it was a good idea.

### Human Services and Corrections Committee

By building philosophical coalitions and working with the chairman of this committee, I was able to stop an attempt by a powerful House chairwoman to soften the penalty for 16- and 17-year-olds who are convicted of first degree murder. Currently, the maximum sentence is 20 years, but there was an effort to reduce it to as little as six to eight years.

### Progress House

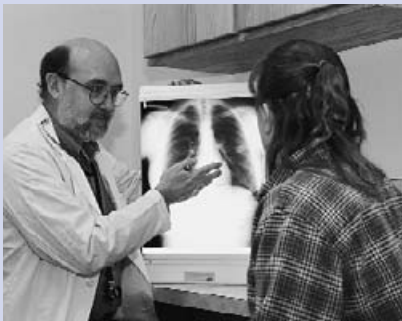
Progress House is a **troubled work release program** for felons (drug addicts, burglars and some violent offenders) that the Dept. of Corrections wants to **move onto the grounds of Western State Hospital**.

We recently wrote a letter to the state attorney general asking for a formal opinion on questions relating to the relocation of Progress House to Western State Hospital. Hopefully he will agree it is a bad idea.

This summer, I intend to work on legislation on how to best supervise released inmates, which may include drastic changes to our state’s work release program.

*“Gigi and I would like to thank those who attended the March 17 update meeting on Progress House. We felt the meeting was productive and a great opportunity to share concerns about the possible relocation of this program into our community.”*

– Mike



## Increasing access to health care (Gigi)

Many of our neighbors and family members are struggling with the costs of health care and some have no access to insurance.

All legislators agree families need health care insurance that is **affordable and addresses their**

**needs**. However, there are differences in philosophy in how to go about doing this.

Some believe a state government-run health care system is the answer. I disagree and believe this approach will only **shift health care decisions from you and your doctor to government bureaucrats**.

We need to get to the core of what is driving our health care costs to outpace inflation. I support **market-based solutions** – rather than new government-run programs – and believe they will **reduce the cost burden to consumers** and lead us closer to a world-class health care system.

Here are some ideas I believe

will lower the cost of health insurance for all of us:

- **Assessing costly health insurance mandates** that drive up the cost of health care insurance. It’s time to decide whether acupuncture and 47 other services should be mandated and paid for by everyone.
- Clearing the way for **Health Savings Accounts** so patients can make their own health care decisions and stretch their dollars.
- Enacting **true liability reform**. If we don’t, these costs will continue to be passed down to consumers and doctors will retire early or leave our state.

## Initiatives (Mike)

Over our objections, the 2005 Legislature **repealed a record number of initiatives** and ignored the “no” votes on other referenda and initiatives – like **Referendum 51** (nine-cent gas tax increase) and **Initiative 884** (one-cent sales tax increase).

The state Constitution specifically allows the repeal of laws by the people. This year, the majority party inserted **emergency clauses** in many controversial bills to **stop the people from repealing them**. They claimed these

emergency clauses are “necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health or safety.” Below are some of the most **egregious examples**:

- **Initiative 601** was passed by the people in 1993 to control the growth of state government. This year, the spending limit was “modified” so Democrats could raise taxes by a simple majority rather than a super majority (two-thirds) vote in the Legislature. Then they voted for a 12.4 percent increase in state spending.
- **Initiative 695** (\$30 license tabs)

was passed by the people in 1999. The push for this measure was that license fees weren’t based on the actual value of the vehicle and not used for road improvements. With the imposition of the new weight fee tax, I-695 is effectively dead.

- **Initiative 402** – abolishing the death tax – was approved in 1981 by more than 67 percent of the vote. While the federal death tax was recently removed by Congress, a state death tax was re-imposed.

## Election reforms



The Legislature approved two large election reform measures this session – **Senate Bills 5743 and 5499**. Although we voted differently, we both agree

the bills do the following:

- Improve the voter rolls.
- Prohibit ballot enhancements.
- Require identification.

We also agree that the bills lack the following:

- No proof of citizenship required to register to vote.
- No photo identification required to vote. Voters can use sewer or power bills as ID to vote.

*“I voted against these measures because they were mostly token reforms. Neither really fix systemic problems within our election system.” – Mike*

*“I voted for long-needed reforms because they move us in the right direction, even though we couldn’t get the votes for important proof of citizenship and photo ID.” – Gigi*

## Important odds & ends (Gigi)

Over **500 bills** passed this year and here are a few that you may be interested in. Please give us a call, write or e-mail if you’d like more information. Or you can visit this website and enter the bill number. <http://www.leg.wa.gov/wsladm/billinfo1/bills.cfm>

- **Giving California control of our auto emission standards (House Bill 1397)** – “Clean car” legislation passed may raise the costs of new cars around \$3,000 to lower emissions by 1-3 percent over the next 15 years – not the 20 percent the bill promises.
- **Dismantling the important changes to our unemployment insurance (UI) system (House Bill 2255)** – We made important changes to our UI system in 2003 that made it fair and equitable to all employers. This year, we unraveled this agreement and sent a terrible message to our job providers
- **Symbolic prescription drug legislation (House Bill 1186)** – A prescription drug measure passed that even its own sponsor admits is symbolic and won’t reduce costs. We need market-based

solutions that don’t rely on other countries’

prescription drug supplies.

- **Our battle for healthy lakes** – After many meetings and dynamic testimony from Lakewood residents, help may be on the way in our battle with the Dept. of Ecology. A few words can make a difference – I was able to add “with priority for the treatment of lakes in which harmful algae blooms have occurred within the past three years” to a new law. We desperately need restoration of healthy lakes around our state – starting with our own in Lakewood and on Anderson Island.
- **Women of World War II (Senate Bill 5563)** – Two years ago, a documentary on the lives of World War II veterans was launched. Now we can add the personal stories of the women. If you know a neighbor or someone in your family from WWII, please call us.



Senator  
**Mike Carrell**

Representative  
**Gigi Talcott**

PO Box 40428, Olympia, WA 98504-0428

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## **Town Hall Meetings**

see details inside

# Keep in Touch

## **State Senator Mike Carrell**

### **Olympia office:**

PO Box 40428  
109A Newhouse Building  
Olympia, WA 98504-0428  
(360) 786-7654

**Local phone:** 589-7296

**Home phone:** 581-2859

**E-mail:** [carrell.mike@leg.wa.gov](mailto:carrell.mike@leg.wa.gov)

**Carrell's legislative homepage:**

[http://www1.leg.wa.gov/Senate/  
SRC/Senators/Carrell.htm](http://www1.leg.wa.gov/Senate/SRC/Senators/Carrell.htm)

## **State Representative Gigi Talcott**

### **Olympia office:**

PO Box 40600  
426B Legislative Building  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
(360) 786-7890

**Local phone:** 589-7296

**Home phone:** 564-9779

**E-mail:** [talcott.gigi@leg.wa.gov](mailto:talcott.gigi@leg.wa.gov)

**Talcott's legislative homepage:**

[http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/  
talcott.htm](http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/talcott.htm)

**Toll-free Legislative Hotline:** 1-800-562-6000

**TTY (Hearing-impaired Hotline):** 1-800-635-9993

**Legislative information on the Internet:** [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)

